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ABSTRACT

School-age child care is a relatively new phenomenon, created as a result of the loss of the geographically close extended family and the influx of women into the workforce. This manual examines the nature of school-age child care and those who provide it. The first section examines: the purpose of school-age child care; the role of the child care provider; and the issue of professionalism. The next five sections examine the following issues in school-age child care: (1) empowering vs. herding, empowering children so that they can be growing, active participants in their own development as well as decision-makers about their own child-care program; (2) play vs. busy-ness, teaching children the value of play, playing hard, playing fair, and resting; (3) community building vs. activities, making ethical behavior and community involvement an integral part of child care; (4) maturity vs. sophistication, stressing the danger of sophistication without maturity; and (5) self-disciplined vs. teacher-punished, noting the connection between empowerment and self-discipline in the child care paradigm. The manual concludes with sections on problems and solutions that children face, and issues for further study. The manual and accompanying discussion guide contain over 70 references. (TJQ)

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Giving Children Their Childhood Back

Laurie Ollhoff

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Acknowledgments

Purpose statement of this manual:

This manual is to generate dialog in the profession. It is my hope that child care workers will be motivated to take action and decide the mission of school-age child care.

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About the Content:

The ideas and thoughts expressed here in the journal are those of the author and not necessarily the opinions of Project KIDS or School District #191.

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To the Reader

The title of this work is "Giving children their childhood back." It seems to me that many aspects of our culture try to take childhood away. I have had a six-year old who was starving herself because she believed she was too fat. I have had kindergartners coming to child care who have had to spend weeks home alone. I have had children terrified of going to see their father, not knowing what he will be like this weekend. We have all had experiences like these.

Kids today face complex moral dilemmas earlier than ever before. TV brings all the graphic violence imaginable right into their living room. Many children see the proliferation of guns in their neighborhood and worry about being shot in their own backyard.

In many instances, children are left to fend for themselves; forced to make adult decisions; alienated from a community of people who could help and support them.

I believe school-age child care can be a force for giving children their childhood back. SACC programs that have their base in relationships can teach social skills, interpersonal problem-solving, communication, and healthy emotional expression—all things that we are quietly losing. **I believe that SACC programs can refocus their efforts to be powerful vehicles for children's health and wholeness.**

This manual was made possible by the Network Mentoring Grant Program of the Minnesota Department of Education. Janice Jordan of Wayzata and I were paired and given a grant to improve the quality of child care in our respective programs.

Our process was helped by Jim Therrell, Steve Musson, and others who confirmed our ideas and taught us new ideas and concepts.

This manual presents some of our thinking and learning over the past year. It contains more questions than answers, but identifying the important questions is always the first step. This manual is my tentative hypothesis, and I anxiously await the reactions, responses, and feedback from other SACC workers.

These articles and the issues they raise are meant to be the process—they are not meant to be answers forever sealed in concrete. This is shared speculation, thinking out loud. This is a document designed to help me and others think about child care; it is a manual to pull apart, to agree with this section and to disagree with that section. If it does not generate dialog within the profession, then it has not served its purpose.

Dedicated to the children.

Laurie Ollhoff

Introduction

Toby

It's 2:45, and little Toby finishes his last class for the day. He trudges out of his third-grade classroom, grabs his coat and lunchbox, and goes downstairs. He is greeted at the door by an adult who checks him off the list. Toby is told to sit down and color a picture until everyone is here. A whistle blows, and that is the sign for group time. Toby obediently moves to the circle on the floor to be told the schedule for the day. First, Toby is taken to snack, then to the art room. At the art room, he pastes two sheets of paper together and colors it like he is told. Before he finishes, he has to line up at the door. He waits for everyone to get in line. His group marches single file to the gym, where they are told the game for the day. At 5:15, his dad shows up to take him home.

Sam

Sam leaves his class at 2:45, skipping down the hall to the child care room. He finds the adult, and tells her his name, and he is checked off the list. Suddenly realizing he forgot his backpack, he leaves again, wandering upstairs to the hallrack. He grabs it, and meanders back to his child care room. He stands at the door, deciding what to do, finally resolving himself to get a snack. A few other kids are in snack too, and Sam helps himself, walking around the room as he eats it. When he's half-done, he decides he'd rather be outside, so he dumps the rest of his snack in the garbage and goes outside to the playground. He catches up with a few playmates, and they play a game that blends science fiction and war games. Sam gets bored after a while, and moves inside to the gym. He asks the adult what everybody is playing, and the adult replies that she isn't sure. Sam watches a bit, and figures out the game and joins in. At 5:15 Sam's dad opens the door; he's been looking for his son. Sam's dad looks at the mass of children, vainly trying to scope out his son. Finally he asks the adult if he's here. She really doesn't know. She asks what Sam looks like, but then Sam comes bounding over to meet his dad.

Amy

It's 2:45. Amy comes to a screeching halt in front of the child-care room. She laughs and chats with friends as they wait to be checked in by the supervising adult. She checks in and immediately joins the rest of the group for snack. While they eat, the adults sit and eat with them and then the children are told their options for the day. Amy decides what she wants to do, checking it out with her friends close by. Today, Amy decides to be in the gym. Amy puts a 3x5 card marked "gym" in a pocket with her name, so that she can easily be found when her parent comes. In gym she learns a new game and plays it with her friends. Afterward, the adult asks if anyone has any ideas on how to make a new game. With the adult facilitating, the children make up a gym game, and then play it then and there. When the gym time is over, Amy has a choice between homework, computer, or outside. She chooses outside. She puts the new card marked "outside" in her pocket, and the "outside children," accompanied by the adult, head outside to the playground equipment. At 5:15 Amy's mom arrives, and chats with the adult before Amy comes running over from the monkeybars.

What's the difference between the experience of Toby, Sam, and Amy? Does the difference matter? What is the purpose of the time between 2:45 and 5:15?

Three Critical Questions

School-age child care is a relatively new phenomenon, created as a result of the loss of the geographically close extended family and the influx of women into the workforce. As a fledgling profession, it is time to ask important questions, and determine an intelligent future for the vocation of child care. If we in the profession do not ask these questions of ourselves, someone else will answer the questions for us.

Critical question number one: **What is our purpose?** What is the mission of child care? Is it simply to have a place for children to go between 2:45 and 5:15, so that they stay off the streets? It is to provide children with a host of enrichment activities? Is it to babysit them until their parents come?

Critical question number two: **What is our role?** Is the role of adults in child care to plan activities for the children? To supervise the children? To control the environment so that the children are safe and happy? Should we become experts in childhood development so that the children are experiencing growth and affirmation? How should we be trained differently than the classroom teacher?

Critical questions number three: **Do we want to become a profession?** If we want to become development experts, authorities in social development and childhood interaction, then we need to become a profession. If we want to be babysitters and planners of activities for children, then professionalism is not a critical issue. There are certain steps to make and prices to pay if professionalism is on our agenda.

I believe these questions are sequential and invariant. They are sequential because how we answer number 1 affects how we answer number 2. We must answer numbers 1 and 2 before we can answer number 3. The questions are invariant because they must be answered. Even by not answering them, we answer them. And if we don't answer them, it is likely that someone else will answer them for us.

We must always begin with the question of purpose. We can have no coherent activities until we decide our purpose. If we have no purpose, but just random activities, we will be "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, but signifying nothing." If we have a direction in mind, we can select activities and curriculums that will get us to where we want to go.

Purpose

Ask someone what the schools are for. The answer will inevitably be "to teach kids." Schools have an identity. They know their purpose, they understand their identity. Of course, debate rages on the finer points of when and what children should learn, but everyone agrees that it should be the schools who teach it.

What is our role? Are we babysitters or authorities in social development? Experts in art projects or experts in interpersonal communication and problem-solving?

Early childhood is a well-defined discipline now. They certify family educators, they have a line of college courses to study. ECFE programs certify their own child care programs. College programs license ECFE teachers.

But in school-age child care we are experiencing something of an identity crisis. Are

we a school after school? Some SACC centers advertise themselves as places to learn; many child care workers are referred to as teachers.

Are we babysitters? Are we high quality babysitters? If not, how are we not like babysitting? Some programs extol how much fun they are. Is that the purpose of child care? What is the big picture? When I interview employees, I ask the question of how our program should differ from babysitting. Frequently, they will give me a puzzled look, and simply comment that they've been very good babysitters.

SACC struggles to find an identity amidst all the possibilities, needs, and desires.

It is my opinion that child care can serve a vital purpose, one which no one else is serving. I do not believe we should be babysitters. I do not believe we need another educational system that helps children develop academically. But we can be and should be an educational system that helps children develop socially, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

We can be a force against the phenomenon of children being home alone. Studies suggest that children who spent significant time home alone develop high-risk behaviors, such as aggressiveness, pre-teen alcoholism and drug use, and poor academic skills.

Children are rarely taught how to get along with others. We assume, idyllically, that children learn to do that on their own. We assume, idyllically, that children know how to play well. We assume that children know how to rest and de-stress themselves. We assume that children learn on their own how to solve interpersonal problems without violence. We apparently assume respect for others comes naturally. These are dangerous and completely unfounded assumptions.

Child care can be the place where children learn how to play, how to communicate effectively, how to problem-solve, how to show respect. Schools don't have time to do this, with all the subject academia that needs to be taught. Parents often don't have the opportunities to teach these things to children because the child is not always in a peer group.

Since SACC is a place where children of different ages and ethnic groups—and adults—combine to form a single tribe. It is here that social interaction can be taught, facilitated, and extended. Life tools can be shared and transmitted in the microcosm of the group. It is my opinion that SACC can fill a deep, dark void in our society.

SACC can be the place for social development, for training in the life skills that are taught no where else. SACC can play a vital role in the health and healing of children, families, and society.

We can endlessly debate the question of quality and how to measure it. But the first question must be "what is our purpose?" What should be happening during these precious childhood hours? How can we design SACC programs to meet the social and developmental needs of kindergarteners and sixth graders? How can we help children become all they can be?

Role

What is the role of adults in SACC? And in a complementary question, what is the role of children?

In many cases, the child care worker spends as much or more time with the child than the parents. We must think carefully before we decide to spend all that life-childhood time coloring pictures, cutting, and pasting. Should we see ourselves as almost a surrogate parent? Teaching life skills? Teaching interpersonal problem-solving and communication? Building self-esteem and a sense of responsibility to the tribe? I believe so!

We also frequently spend more time with parents than any other person in the educational system. What is our responsibility to work with families? I believe that parents need us on their side—and we can affirm and support them with understanding and effective listening. When I hear a SACC worker put down parents, I wonder why they choose to work in child care. We need to be sure that our programs and staff model family-friendly policies for the rest of the business world.

What is our role as the adult in the group? We put much energy into keeping the environment safe (as well we should). But is that enough? Is it enough to simply keep the kids safe until their parents come?

What kinds of responsibilities should the child have? Planning? Leading? Deciding what they do for the day? Discipline?

Recently a third grader asked me why he could call me "Laurie" and he had to call his classroom teacher "Mrs. Smith." I told him that I wanted him to think of me more as a friend than a teacher. He responded, "Cool." Is our role closer to a friend, or closer to a teacher?

What will happen when we give up the control inherent in a teacher-dominated, authoritarian environment? In a SACC setting, I believe kids will have a more affirming, healthier time. We can tell them they're worthwhile people who can be trusted to behave. It seems to me the feeling of being trusted is one of the important ways that build self-esteem.

What are the tools we need to give children? What tools for life and living are they maybe picking up, maybe not? Are there social and interpersonal skills that SACC programs can impart?

What is our role? Are we babysitters or authorities in social development? Experts in art projects or experts in interpersonal communication and problem-solving? Is our role to control everything that goes on, or to allow for leadership development and serendipitous playfulness?

Professionalism

Professionalism has to do with how we are trained, the sphere of knowledge from which we draw to satisfy the expectations of our role. The first question we need to ask ourselves is "do we want to become a profession?" Do we want to pay the price for becoming a profession?

I define professionalism with the three components listed below.

HAVING A THEORY BASE: I had a child care employee once named Sally, who is an example of someone without a theory base. While she cared deeply for the children, and they liked her, she was not a professional, because she did not operate out of a theory base. She had not attended college and she resisted continuing education conferences. The techniques she used for learning, attention, and discipline are what she had seen other people do. When confronted with a new situation, she had no ability to look at her theory and extrapolate what should work. She had to do something on a hit-or-miss basis, and see if it worked. If it worked according to a standard that she had arbitrarily set up, then she would do that again next time.

A professional, on the other hand, is one who has a theory base. I had an employee named Amy who epitomized this base of knowledge. She knew her child development theories, she knew what styles of communication were affirming, and what kind of style to use where. When she was confronted with a totally new situation, she was able to look at her knowledge base and determine what should work, and then she'd try it to see if the results were what was expected. Theory and experience constantly rework each other in a professional. And in a changing society, with new challenges all the time, only a professional can survive.

COLLEGE BA PROGRAMS is another component of professionalism. A standardized BA curriculum for child care would fill a void. At this point, some technical schools have courses in child care, but it is not enough. A college BA program in child care would need to emphasize: social development; communication; interpersonal problem solving; child leadership and peer helping.

A CODE OF ETHICS is an agreement among the people within a vocation concerning appropriate and inappropriate behavior. This would give the guidelines concerning children who misbehave, issues in sexual harassment, responsibilities of the adults. A breach of a code of ethics means to be brought up in front of a review board with the possibility of losing their "license" to do child care.

Most child care programs have a philosophy statement that is in place before the doors open to the public (if they don't, they should!). If possible, the task of evaluating that philosophy should be paramount. However, there are times when changing the philosophy is not possible. We live with a certain statement.

How does a philosophy statement, written five years ago impact us today? How does a philosophy statement written in the National office affect our children?

An organization can have only one philosophy statement, but several purpose statements can flow from that philosophy. An idea adapted from Steven Covey is to take the existing philosophy statement to your site, study it, and then, as a whole staff, write your own purpose statement. By doing this, your staff can have ownership in the broader philosophy.

At our site, we looked at our program's philosophy statement and the mission statement of our school district. We asked "how can we make this happen here?" As a group, we outlined the philosophy statement, broke into categories, and then brainstormed all the best ways to make that statement a reality. We finished with a purpose statement, and goals and objectives based on the district's philosophy. And now ours was no longer just a statement: it was our vision, our plan of action, our blueprint for life at our site.

Empowering vs. Herding

How we began

When I first got into child care, I used to define my job as a "herder of children." Moving children from the gym to art; gathering them like a shepherd and then herding them outside. No goals, no long-range plans. Just move them along, stopping to graze occasionally. Providing them with an activity, then moving them again.

When I grew dissatisfied with herding, I started to use two measuring sticks to evaluate the system: the children and the staff. In the children I looked for signs of happiness, affirmation, and what their behavior was like. I assumed that much problem behavior was the result of boredom, lack of motivation, or rebellion at the idea of being an underling all day.

In the staff, I looked for signs of burnout, heaviness, and stress. I believed that adults would grow weary from being in charge so much, because herding means heavily adult-structured. When groups get slightly out of control, or a child's behavior problem rose, I looked for signs of stress in the staff—due to the assumption that "I must be in charge, in control of them at all times." (This assumption must lead to burnout, because we can never control children's behavior all the time. If we take responsibility for the child's behavior, and also believe that we must be in control of them, then the result can only be staff stress.)

In the staff, I saw heaviness, stress, and burnout under the old system. In the children, the behavior problems showed us that the after-school schedule wasn't meeting their needs. Behavior problems were like grass fires, and the staff was tired of putting them out. The staff was bored and tired; the children were unmotivated by the same gym games and the paste-this-on-that art projects. The children were tired of being told what to do.

When I realized that the program wasn't working, I tried to make small adjustments and changes: a better art project, a more extravagant game in gym. Then I finally realized that an entire restructuring, starting over from scratch, was in order. We had to do more than just change activities, we had to change our assumptions about child care!

We slowly moved toward the new system of empowering children. At first the staff (and me!) expressed resistance and fear. Sometimes the fear of the unknown is greater than the fear of known misery. But, I believed we were on the right track, so we persevered.

Starting Small

We started doing small things to empower children. One of our first moves was to select line leaders. These line leader children were the older children, grades four through six, and they would take small groups of four to five children upstairs to wash their hands for snack. We allowed the leaders to reward

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the other children in their group with stickers. We had taught the older children how to be line leaders; we modeled positive talk; and we taught them how to use transitions from one activity to another.

I remember a boy named Jerry. He was a fifth grader and a line leader, and all the other children wanted to be in Jerry's group. He made it fun! He'd make it fun by entertaining the children with silly voices and actions. The children in his group were so enthralled that they never even thought of causing any trouble for him.

We listened to the children. We frequently asked what they wanted, what they enjoyed, what they liked. No change happened overnight, but we grew in respect for each other and grew in the skills we needed to make the transitions.

We made a schedule where the children were offered choices and more free time. We hoped that the choice groups would become mixed ages (and that's what happened). We varied the days so that different choice options and different free time options were available on different days.

We also had a number of town meetings with the children. Kindergarteners through sixth graders came up with a mission statement for Rahn Project KIDS. After we wrote and understood the mission statement, we brainstormed behaviors that would make that mission happen. Then a group of representatives, a boy and a girl from each grade, took the list of behaviors and wrote a social contract for our site. I believe that since the ideas came from them, and we listened to their concerns, our site became more peaceful, playful, and happy.

We began to see ourselves as facilitators of children's ideas and dreams.

Overcoming the challenges

It was not a perfect and completely smooth transition. It was hard for all of us staff to let go and let the children lead. We began to realize we couldn't just give more freedom—we had to provide the skills to handle the freedom.

Some adults have significant controlling tendencies. Over the years, several employees have washed out because they were unable to let the children make decisions. Or, the adult let children make decisions until they made a decision that the adult didn't agree with. Those kind of adults have extreme difficulty in this environment.

Some children, especially at first, took advantage of their new-found freedom as leaders. That happens with less frequency now, because the children know that this is how our little society runs—that it is not just a new program we tried. Children also know and live with the consequences of irresponsibility.

Another ongoing challenge is that decision-making is messier, and takes more time. No longer do the adults just decide it and go with it. Now we run ideas and suggestions past the group. Making decisions takes a lot longer.

We had to do more than just change activities, we had to change our assumptions about child care!

As time went on, the children realized this was here to stay. And staff realized that the concept worked.

After some time went by, the younger children expressed that they wanted to be helpers, too. They wanted and needed a place to fit. People understand their place when they know their expectations, their social roles. Our staff listened to the children, and the children chose to be helpers at snack, breakfast, etc.

It is good and right for the staff to set the boundaries. When does the staff get involved in an issue? When do they let the children handle it? These are judgment calls, with no easy way to say when you should and shouldn't contribute, trouble shoot, etc.

And It Continues

Children want responsible roles within the "tribe" so that they know how to belong. It gives them a greater sense of self-esteem to know they have a contribution to make—a contribution that is worthwhile and necessary.

The staff at Rahn supports this empowerment concept, and everyone looks for ways to expand it more fully. It is a credit to our perceptive staff to hear off-hand comments that betray a dissatisfaction with a role or lack thereof. Constant attentiveness can keep roles adjusting and children happy. The staff is more free than they ever have been, free from the little things that used to bog us down.

The whole tribe, adults and children, continue to experiment and implement new areas for the children. Peer tutoring, peer helpers, youth leadership, service opportunities, clubs such as EarthCare, choices and voting, are all ways we have continued to implement empowerment. We are not finished, by any means, but we are on the road to healthy, happy children, and adults who enjoy what they do.

This empowerment idea, is a risky philosophy by itself. It cannot be undertaken successfully without the other issues that are dealt with below. Empowerment without play is drudgery. Empowerment without community building is ripe for interpersonal conflict. Empowerment without maturity is irresponsibility. Empowerment without self-discipline is a deceptive sham. Each of these child care issues is woven together.

KIDS Council

This component of our program has become one of the key areas of focus. Time, sweat, energy, and tears have been poured into the development of the council. We started small, and over the course of five years we have made it into what it is today.

It began out of a simple concern to keep the older children (forth through sixth graders) interested in coming. When we started the council, the children didn't know what to do with their new-found freedom—they didn't really believe we would do what they wanted to do. They felt they were being taken advantage of, so they made snide and inappropriate comments. I ignored negative behavior and grasped on to anything that was appropriate. Slowly, the realizations hit the kids that we were taking this seriously.

We began to meet weekly, facilitating the group-ness. We met in the school's media center, somewhere they could go that let them know that they have arrived. The children wanted to have officers like the school student council. They elected a president, to call meetings, to run the meeting, to plans the agenda (with an adult facilitator), and delegates responsibility. The vice president helps committees keep a time line, checks on resources for committees, runs the meetings if the president is not there, meets with other officers and committee chairs. The secretary keeps minutes, keeps committee reports, and keeps attendance records. The treasure keeps financial records, and keeps a wish list for when money is available.

In the summer, with more children and less time, the children form committees. They prioritize the ideas and write a time line.

Over the years we've corrected some of our mistakes. We're better at realizing when to step in and make suggestions, and when to stay out. Occasionally we have taken too much on, and then exhausted everyone trying to pull it all off. Sometimes we forgot to keep the council light and fun.

It has come a long way in five years. It is our primary vehicle for empowering children, giving them a voice to modify and help direct our program.

Play vs. Busy-ness

Play 101

We are a hopelessly busy society. Everyone runs all day long like the proverbial headless poultry and then falls exhausted into bed at night.

Children are busy, too, but lack the experience and capacity of adults to handle that stress and busy-ness. It is not surprising that stress-related illnesses are multiplying in children. They are exposed to more violence, more sex, more complex ethical issues, more technology, more questions at a younger age than ever before. David Elkind, one of the nations pioneers in child development, calls the syndrome, "the hurried child." Children, he says, don't get time to be children; they are forced to grow up too fast.

Children need play. They need the mindful, person-absorbing activity of play to make life usable again. Adults need it, too. We busy ourselves and work ourselves into early graves, forgetting the nature and importance of leisure time and play.

Children also need to be taught to play. The skills of playing hard and playing fair are learned behaviors. Child care is the optimum time to teach those important skills.

We also can teach them how to rest, which is the heart of play. No where in our society, outside of the psychotherapist's office, are we taught how to rest well. We are never taught how to de-stress and de-busy our lives. It is no surprise then that adults also struggle with stress-related illnesses.

Play is more than having fun. Play is essence of childhood learning. Play allows learning to happen naturally. Our children are frequently not ready to learn when they get to school. Perhaps a significant factor in that is lives that are too stressed, noisy, and busy.

Teaching play goes beyond laughing at situations and being spontaneous. We model healthy play when we play games for fun; when we teach the difference between playing hard and playing to win. Competition can breed defensiveness, and I believe we need to take advantage of the multitude of non-com-

petitive games, and the techniques to make regular games less competitive.

Perhaps, in the job orientation of the child care worker, we should have to go to school for a week as a child. Doing what they do; sitting when they sit, listening, moving from room to room, waiting for a chance to get a drink or use the rest room. Would that change our approach to child care? After a long and structured day, would we want to go to child care and sit and listen to another adult drone on about another activity? I suspect that what we would want to do is talk with friends, lay on the grass and watch the sky, roll down a hill, skip, yell, scream, laugh, let go, play.

Do we really have to make the whole group sit and be quiet before we can go anywhere? Do we have to make them be quiet in the gym and sit on the green line? Do we have to walk the halls in silent single-file?

Do we need to have every minute planned? Does our day-to-day program allow space for spontaneity? On the other hand, I am not advocating a hands-off approach, where there is no structure, no activities. Adults need to set up the boundaries and then facilitate a structure; they need to help the children understand that it is their program and many of the decisions are their's. Adults need to facilitate a group decision—not just listen to the first child who talks! Adults must facilitate the decisions without interfering with the decisions or the responsibility to carry them out.

Some examples

GYM GAMES: In gym games, I believe that it's very important for the adults to play right along with the children, When adults play, they need to remember to play, laugh, play hard (as opposed to playing to win), and enjoy the game right along with the kids.

Is playing the same gym game day after day (even if it's the group's favorite) the epitome of play? Of course, we want to play their favorite games, but can we occasionally stop and rethink the game? Perhaps have the children make changes to make it new?

Maybe have the children make up a new game on the spot? Sometimes inventing a new game will be a huge success, and sometimes it won't work at all. To have life and fun in the process is the definition of play. That is a skill that we outcome-oriented Americans often miss, and often forget to teach our children.

GROUP PROCESS: Adults, as facilitators of the group process, need to remember to keep things moving. Keep it light and fun.

I had an employee who truly listened to the children, and wanted to facilitate their ideas. But when the time came for the work to be done, and the children were falling behind, this employee rescued the children and did the work herself. Needless to say, the children lost interest in the project, and then the adult was tired and angry because the children did not follow through!

The skills of playing hard and playing fair are learned behaviors. Child care is the optimum time to teach those important skills. We also can teach them how to rest, which is the heart of play.

Occasionally children do lose interest in a project (nothing like adults—adults always follow through on every project!). When that is the case, it is better to have a group meeting to decide if the project is still important to them, if not, why not, and then get a commitment to continue or an agreement to let it rest.

TRYING NEW THINGS: Adventure is another vital component of programing in child care that has it roots in play. To be adventurous is to try new things, to be playful in the process rather than evaluate the outcome.

SELF-ASSUREDNESS: At our site we occasionally enjoy a card game called "speed." The children had a tournament, and the staff, as always, participated. I remember one of the staff was being soundly thrashed in the tournament. The children were legitimately beating him. He was able to handle it with grace

and humor. I know some adults who would have been defensive, made excuses, etc. The key is we need staff who are comfortable enough in their self-esteem that any situation can be a opportunity to build the children, to affirm them, to give them the acorns of self-esteem.

ART: Art can be an adventure, too. When an art lesson or activity is presented, we can stretch the children by showing them ways to vary the project to make it unique and an expression of self.

Art is a combination of skills, knowledge, talent, and sometimes luck. Most of what we call "art projects" are simple crafts—a paste-this-on-that. There may be a place for crafts, but true art must be an expression of self. Often, children aren't allowed the time, taught the skills, or given the variety of mediums to explore an idea. Children need time to play in a medium, and time to work with it so that it can express their self. Too often children are rushed through a project so that they can be rushed off to their next activity.

When we made Chinese dragons out of clay, I stressed to the children that this is my tenth clay dragon, not my first, Otherwise, many children would tend to evaluate their work based on mine.

Most children crumple up a drawing before they start a new one. I encourage them to keep looking at the old one to make sure they don't make the same mistake while they draw the new one. Learning, not success, becomes the issue.

By allowing children to experience art in a playful, un-stressed environment, where success is based on expression and not on production, children are allowed to experience the freedom to discover new and important ways to express themselves.

ON-GOING PROJECTS: On-going, long-term projects can be good ways to teach children the value of play. They can learn the challenges, pitfalls, and joys of accomplishing a larger project.

Try an extravagant talent show—one that asks parents to watch, provides refreshments, very good productions, flyers and advertising, etc. Remember, it is their work, so they do it. You will have to be involved as a facilitator, troubleshooter, etc.

We have access to a wonderful wooded area next to our site. We got permission from the city to let the children blaze a trail through the dense forest. We carried endless piles of wood chips to cover the path. We are now learning (I'm learning too!) some basic orienteering techniques and skills.

The children in our leadership team, the KIDS Council, planned a carnival for the rest of the kids at our site and the children in the neighborhood. The project involved raising money, ordering supplies, making decisions about how much to charge, how to give prizes, donating their own toys for prizes, and making signs and fliers. It took a month and half of work, but the children pulled it off beautifully.

When we had our program's 15th anniversary, the children invited our Minnesota Senator, Paul Wellstone. The children helped order food, received donations from several stores, sent out invitations, and helped with the final decorations and preparations. When the Senator came, they ate with him and asked him questions.

Conclusion of Play

Again, it pays to reiterate the interconnectedness of these five issues. Play without empowerment is to play what someone else thinks is fun. Play without community building is to take your marbles and go home if you don't get your way. Play without maturity is simply buying bigger and bigger toys. Play without being self-disciplined is to be unfair, or even dangerous.

Community-building vs. Activity-led

Ethical behavior

This is the piece of the puzzle where children and staff dialog about society, the needs of people, and the skills of caring for each other. Without this strong ethical dimension, child cares can plummet into partisanship, jostling to be the top dog, and me-first-ism.

This ethical component is critical because it touches all the areas of not only child care, but life. How-to be in relationships, doing team work, cooperation, skills for getting along, accepting diversity, non-violence, problem-solving—these are all areas with a heavy ethical component—caring for each other and respecting each other.

It is my opinion that child care centers that focus on activities, without an attention to the ethical dimension of community building, are missing an opportunity to contribute to the children's health and wholeness. If we don't learn how to get along, we are simply unable to function.

I don't believe that community building should be just another thing we do. It should be embedded in every thing we do.

Aspects of community building

LEADERSHIP SHARING: The child care of which I am a part is led by a team of people, children and adults. This team-led approach is only possible when there is mutual respect, and a capacity to give up our own preeminence.

TEACHING CARING BEHAVIORS: Albert Schweitzer said there are three ways to teach children. The first is by example. The second is by example. The third is by example. We can model caring behavior among the staff and children. We can complement children who have cared for another.

TEACHING SKILLS OF ALTRUISM: The best time to teach a skill is in the midst of the activity where the skill is needed. The best time to teach interpersonal problem-solving is when two kids are arguing. The best time to teach altruistic behavior is during an altruistic activity.

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Service projects

Service projects are an excellent way to teach altruism, caring, and leadership-sharing. Here are some examples of what we have done.

We adopted the road between our school and the nearby shopping center. The children and a few adults go out every other week to pick up all the trash that blew in from the center. It is dirty work, but the children don't seem to mind. The words of one first grader have always stuck with me: "We really made a difference today, didn't we?

Our area has a program called "Armful of Love," designed to help needy families at Christmas. We are assigned a family in need, and we receive their Christmas wish list. We collect money from the families of our program, and then our KIDS Council goes to Target to purchase the items for the family. This has been a very powerful experience for the children. The wish list is for things like hats, mittens, socks, and food, and usually nothing for the parents. Our children bring their calculators and look for the best possible buys so they can get the maximum amount of goods.

We have adopted our school. This means we take care of all the schools recyclables, pick up the grounds, plant flowers, and raise money for trees. We have adopted the park near our school, and so we pick up the grounds, plant seedlings, and keep the playground safe.

The KIDS Council planned an event for seniors and grandparents, called "Senior Citizen Day." The kids planned entertainment, prepared refreshments, wrote the invitations, did the shopping, and hosted the day. They also followed up the event by delivering potted flowers to all the guests.

KIDS Council kids lead activities for the younger children. They have learned how to prepare an activity, teach an activity, and then lead an activity.

We borrowed an idea from Janice Jordan in Wayzata, and started Handy Helpers. This is a club that offers their services to the school teachers, before and after the school day.

Conclusions of community-building

We need curriculums of multicultural awareness, nonviolence, and self-esteem. We need awareness of caring and altruistic behaviors. We need the experience of caring and respecting each other, particularly within the richness of groups of mixed age, ethnicity, and gender.

We need curriculums for us—adults working in child care, that teach us proper social development, that teach us ways to help children resolve interpersonal problems.

Again, we need to see the scope of the network. Empowerment without ethical behavior is egocentrism. Play without ethics is hedonistic. There is no such thing as maturity without ethical behavior. Self-discipline without ethical behavior becomes punitive and destructive.

EarthCare

This club, for children grades 1 through 6, is one of the youth service components at our site. This environmental awareness club meets weekly and is run by the children, and facilitated by the staff. On a quarterly basis, they make plans for what they would like to learn, projects they would like to adopt, and ways for that adoption to happen. Last year winter quarter they wanted to learn about the rainforest. They learned about the rainforest issues, and as a culmination, decided to write and perform a musical play for their parents. They campaigned to raise money to buy several acres of rainforest, to protect it from being slashed and burned. Within a few weeks of their performance, the Governor of Minnesota invited them to perform at his Earth Day Celebration. Through their performances, they bought six square miles of rainforest in New Guinea. They learned, most importantly, that they could make a difference.

Maturity vs. Sophistication

Introduction

Educator John Westerhoff discusses the difference between maturity and sophistication, and the dangers of the directions we are going. Maturity is growth, a growing competence in social, psychological, and ethical interactions. Maturity is to be wise, to be appropriate, to understand a wide perspective. To be sophisticated is to be street-smart, to have a wide experience in many areas, to be routinely faced with difficult and complex decisions.

Maturity comes from being around adults (or youth) who are older and wiser. It comes from in-depth relationships where mutual intimacy can be explored. Sophistication comes from seeing TV sex and violence, from being exposed to ethical questions earlier than ever before, from worrying about adult issues (like being shot at school), from a growing understanding of technology.

In this country, we are producing children who are more and more sophisticated, at the same time that we are making them less mature.

When we lived with or near grandparents and extended family, we were with adults all the time. Nowadays, most children have only superficial contact with adults. Many children only see their parents a few minutes a day. They have few relationships with adults or peers. Relationships are crowded out by video games, earphones, and TV. Children are having more exposure to the things that create sophistication, and less exposure to things that facilitate maturity.

Sophisticated children without maturity commit crimes, lead immoral lives, make unwise ethical choices, have no respect for themselves or others. Sophistication appeals to our desire for immediate gratification.

Maturity and Sophistication in SACC Programs

I believe this trend in our society can be slowed by child care centers who are attentive to the phenomenon.

If we do not think about our purpose and role in child care, we will tend to just do random activities. The activities may be designed to teach a science lesson or just keep them busy, but they are still activities. When we don't know our purpose and role, we will do arts, crafts, activities, lessons in a hit-or-miss way and not understand why we do them. Our plan then, becomes to vary the activities each year so that they are kept busy and not rebel because "we do this every year!" So, our only hope becomes to buy more expensive toys, go on more field trips, to provide bigger and more extravagant activities. We do more of the same in an attempt to keep kids (and ourselves) from being bored.

Yet, that bigger-and-bigger-toys mentality contributes to the increased sophistication of the children, without contributing to increased maturity.

Studies done on television viewing have reveled that children who watch TV are more aggressive, less social skills, fewer cognitive skills, etc. However, TV does not have the power to cause those consequences in children. Lack of interaction causes those consequences!

Interaction causes maturity. Lack of interaction hinders maturity. Superficial interaction won't facilitate maturity either. The relationships must be mutual, significant, and full of meaning.

The advantage of a SACC setting is the wide range of ages within the group. Small groups of mixed ages are wonderful tools for setting up that environment. Many sites have a small group "tribe time," where mixed age groups perform certain tasks together. The older children see themselves as leaders, and the younger children have opportunities to be with others who are older and wiser.

Do we really need Nintendo games at our site? Sure, the kids enjoy them.... Do they contribute to maturity? Do they help children interact with each other?

In this country, we produce children who are more and more sophisticated, at the same time we make them less mature.

I think it is worthwhile to ask these questions for all the activities at our sites: Does this activity facilitate sophistication at the expense of maturity? Does our site have enough opportunities for children to develop maturity?

Conclusions on the maturity issue

Empowerment without maturity is dangerous. Play without maturity is wild and risky. Community building without maturity cannot happen. Self-discipline without maturity becomes a random hit-or-miss exercise.

Janice Jordan developed a component for their program called "Handy Helpers." Classroom teachers could request a helper, to correct papers, help with bulletin boards, to wash desks, etc. The club was reserved for third graders. This is a way to teach and practice helping skills.

The training of the handy helpers began in talking about the skills needed to be good handy helpers. They put those thoughts into a pledge. Then they toured the school, especially the areas where they would work most.

Now the group meets once a month to discuss difficulties, and play a community building game. We stress that the children assigned to an area are a team—they must wait for each other, clean together, help each other, and return together.

The kids loved the opportunity to feel needed, and the teachers loved the help. One teacher even took two boys, who helped her almost daily, to lunch at the end of the year.

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Self-Disciplined vs. Teacher-Punished

Introduction

What is the nature of children?

Are children competent, contained, and able to make good decisions? Or are they wild animals, who need to be controlled at every second lest they pillage and destroy?

The school in which I work has open classrooms. I am able to hear what happens when teachers are not in the room. The teacher leaves, and the children erupt. There is an uncontrolled melee for a few minutes, and then, inevitably, one child yells, "The teacher is coming, the teacher is coming!" The room quiets down just as the teacher rounds the corner.

Does this happen because we can't expect anything better from the little feral beasts? Or is it because we have oversupervised them, and have never taught them the skills of self-control or self-discipline? I think the latter.

The Problem of Oversupervision

This is an uncomfortable topic. Many of us are administrators who worry about liability, and this topic makes us squirm. It is safer to oversupervise them, because there is less chance of a lawsuit.

However, we need to ask the other question, too. What are the long-term consequences of raising a generation of children who are over- controlled by adults all day long, who never have to make a decision for themselves, never have to think for themselves?

Barbara Colorosa reminds us that we sometimes cause the very thing we don't want. When we tell a child every single day to hang up his coat, and then we wonder why he can never think for himself, well, we shouldn't be surprised.

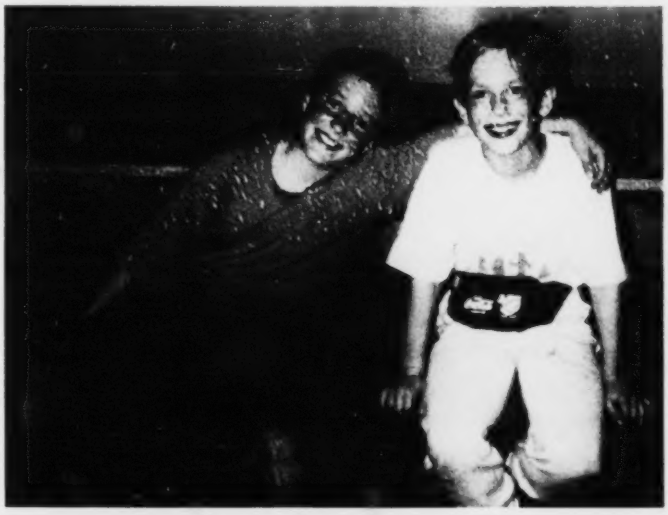
How many of you have heard the phrase, "but no one told me!"?

How many times have you made announcements, and two minutes later, one of the children comes up and asks what you said? It took me a long time to learn that if I repeat myself, that gives them the permission to not listen the next time. Now I tell them to find out from one of the children.

How many times has a child asked us, "do I have to wear my hat today?" Why can't the child figure it out? At what age do they learn to make decisions about wearing hats because it's cold outside?

How many times has a child asked you if they could get a sticker or a treat for something they are supposed to do? It is no wonder that high school graduates only want jobs that pay high salaries. Are we creating an adult population that can't think for themselves? That can't work without supervision? That can't work together?

Recently the Minnesota Business Partnership put forth a report that detailed the skills that children needed to be taught. High school



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and college graduates were hitting those businesses without the skills to work independently, without the skills to work in a team, without the skills to think critically.

Messages of self-discipline

Children will only learn self-discipline in an environment of loving and nurturing support. They will only learn self-discipline if they have a chance to try it, fail at it, and try it again.

Children will learn self-discipline if we send them the messages of I believe in you, I trust you, you can handle it.

In interpersonal conflicts is it necessary for the adults to rescue? Can the children decide together what they will do to solve the problem? If children make the decision, there is less chance of rebellion, because it's hard to rebel against your own decision.

When children are about to blow, do they need to be reminded to shape up, that they will be in big trouble if they do this or that? Or can we remind them to "stop and think"?

When a kid has a problem, must we solve it for them? Or can we say, "you have a problem, now what is your plan?"

When a child tattles, must we act on the tattle (knowing that will encourage other children to tattle)? Or can we ask the tattler, "why are you telling me this?" If the child is trying to get the other in trouble, can we say, "I believe you are capable of handling the situation appropriately without me." Of course, sometimes children might need to practice what they will say. Some children have to be watched closer than others when they go back to work it out. Remember, we are getting out of rescuing them, not so that we have less work! We are getting out of rescuing them so that they learn they are capable people who can solve problems.

Conclusion of Self-discipline

Self-discipline covers a variety of areas, not just controlling inappropriate behavior. It covers higher thinking skills. It covers the self-esteem need of feeling capable. It covers the confidence and the ability to control the environment, rather than be victimized by it.

When we tell a child every day to hang up his coat, and then wonder why he can't think for himself, we shouldn't be surprised.

Again, self-discipline must be seen as part and parcel of the whole paradigm of child care. Self-discipline without empowerment is a waste of time and life. Self-discipline without play is working too hard. Self-discipline without maturity is impossible. Self-discipline without community building misses the point.

Tod was a member of my KIDS Council, and had always been a role model for the other kids—kind, creative, a good leader. But one day he and some friends were getting out of control during lunch. It had been a long day already, and without thinking I slipped into my authoritarian mode. I gave them three warnings. They still didn't settle down, so I laid down the law, forcing Tod to put his head down with the others and be quiet.

He was so hurt by me taking over that he wouldn't play the rest of the day. I realized that I could have handled the situation better, so I talked about it with him. I had taken away his dignity in front of his friends by being the controlling adult. I had imposed myself on the situation rather than inserted myself into the situation. Tod told me that he could have gotten under control himself, and he was right. I could have sat down with them, inserting myself into the situation, and with grace and humor told them that I was glad they were having fun, but that they needed to calm down a little.

If we strive to protect the dignity of children, we can't go wrong. While it would not have protected his dignity to let him be out of control, it certainly did not protect his dignity by being the authoritarian adult in front of his friends.

Problems and Solutions that Children Face

Our society has a great number of children who stay home alone, day after day, for hours at a time. This is considered a major factor in "at-risk behaviors," in problems surrounding the children's ability to appropriately fill that time.

At-risk behaviors lead to experimenting with drugs and alcohol, problems with gangs, etc. Child care can be a solution for the prevention of at-risk behaviors. More research needs to be done and the results made applicable for child care.

We have children who never learn respect, never learn social interaction skills never develop the skills needed for decision making. Child care can help teach those skills, through appropriate relationships with the children. I frequently tell my staff that when the children are older, the toys and games will fade, but they will remember the relationships that touched their lives.

We have children who fail in school because they are not ready to learn. Child care can make an impact on that problem.

We have children who watch too much TV. Studies suggest that TV watching is positively correlated with poor social skills, poorer cognitive ability, and higher aggressiveness. Child care can be a place away from TV and provide the kind of care that stretches and challenges them.

In a society that is increasingly stressed and busy, where children increasingly have stress-related problems, we can make child care into a place that teaches children how to de-stress and de-busy.

Issues for Further Study

A grant has been given from the Department of Education to continue this work, so the plan now is to put out a stronger manual next year. I am hoping for feedback from SACC workers on this manual and the issues for further study below. I am anxious for your thoughts, suggestions, insights, stories. With your help, next year's manual will become more of a collaborative work, including (I hope!) the following things:

- A better developed social science theory for child care. I am planning to do a literature search for the social and emotional development research to better define and fine tune the directions suggested here.
- Resources that will teach SACC workers social development, communication, and interpersonal problem solving; Curriculums that we can use to teach children about nonviolence, self-esteem, and multiculturalism.
- Activities that support the themes of this book and a process for implementing the philosophy described in this manual.
- Suggestions and dialogs from other SACC workers that identify areas that may have been overlooked in this manual.
- And in a society that continues to try to take children's childhood away, and ignores the importance of this time of a child's life, we need to continue to find ways to give children their childhood back.

Conclusion

We in child care need to dialog with each other about our purpose, our role, and whether we should be professionals. We need to continue to dialog about the issues of paradigm change and the new challenges of childhood before us.

This manual is to generate dialog in the profession. It is my hope that child care workers will be motivated to take action and make decisions concerning the mission of school-age child care. If we do not decide the mission of SACC programs, those decisions will be made by others (e.g. administrators, legislators).

We need to be a united voice for the children.

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Comment form

____Yes, I want to participate in the dialog in child care. Below are my comments in reaction to this manual (use other sheets if necessary).

____Please send me ___ copies of *The Discussion Guide* based on this manual.

____Please let me know when more materials and staff development modules are available. My address, phone, and fax are below.

Comments:

Please return this comment form to:

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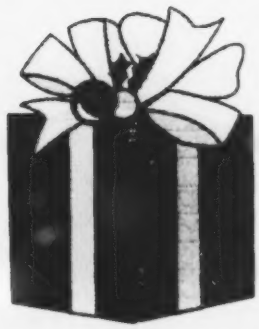
Paradigm Shifts in School-Age Child Care: A Work in Progress

Giving Children Their Childhood Back

The Discussion Guide



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The Network Mentoring Grant of Minnesota, School-Age Child Care Initiative

To the Reader

Giving Children Their Childhood Back was written in November of 1993. The response to it has been much greater than expected. It is being used by college child care classes, for conferences, and for staff development at myriads of child care sites. Hundreds of people have called or written for it, and to this date it has been reprinted four times. Over and over the requests came in to pull together a study guide, so that the discussion it was designed to provoke would be easier. This workbook is the fruit of those requests.

Giving Children Their Childhood Back is a school of thought that believes that society is taking childhood away. Children today are home alone more, face issues of violence, substance abuse, and sexuality much earlier than ever before. More and more children each year become adolescents who become clinically depressed, use drugs and alcohol, engage in sexual behavior, commit crimes, and attempt suicide. More and more children each year never get to adolescence. Children today experience a wide variety of uniquely new stresses and pressures, at younger and younger ages.

We believe that we need a paradigm shift in the understanding of the child care profession. Fundamentally, we believe that child care providers ought to be experts in the development of social skills in children—skills like self-esteem, responsibility, respect, non-violent conflict resolution, altruistic action, and interpersonal communication.

School-age child care is not just a place to keep kids busy until their parents get off work. Rather, SACC is the optimum time and place to teach the social skill that so often are left untaught. By providing children with a safe place to learn to live and play together, we make positive steps in giving children their childhood back.

To that end, a series of staff development books are being prepared, to give the care provider the knowledge needed to effectively carry out this new paradigm.

To use this study guide, you will also need a copy of *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*. The study is probably best done with a small group of staff or colleagues. Each person could prepare beforehand and then come together to discuss the ideas and concepts. Entry level personnel and veterans can both learn from the shared dialog. The leader does not need to be an expert in school age care, just someone who facilitates the dialog.

You may find a different study process helpful. If it can be a tool to help people talk about significant issues in child care, then it will have served its purpose.

Janice and Laurie want to thank Jennifer Heimkes, Deanna Rosenwinkel, Tanya Lorenzen, Heidi Ziegler, Vickie King, and Lavonne Wagner for their unique skills, unselfish help, and critical insights as we developed this manual. This manual would not have been possible without the encouragement and the genuine-ness that they brought to the project.

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Author: Laurie and Jim Ollhoff
Editorial Consultant: Janice Jordan
Editor: Jim Ollhoff

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Introduction

Please read the "Introduction," *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, page 5. From the short scenarios, imagine what it would be like to be in each of those kinds of child care. Dialog with each other as you complete your answers.

	Toby	Sam	Amy
Write a few words describing each child care.			
What is the role of the adults?			
What is the role of the children?			

	Toby	Sam	Amy
What are the assumptions of the adults? What do they believe about children and child care?			
What skills do the adults need to possess in each scenario?			
What skills do the children need to have in each child care?			
What skills will the children learn in each child care?			

5

	Toby	Sam	Amy
If this child care was influential in the children's life, what would they be like in junior high?			
Write a purpose or mission statement for each child care.			

Wrap-up

Compare your answers with each other. Did everyone's answers reflect the same understandings of the environment? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each style of child care?

If our job is to teach social skills to children, then Amy's experience provides the best opportunities. The environment in Amy's child care is more conducive to learning and the psychological safety needed to build and affirm children.

Three Critical Questions

Please read "Three Critical Questions," *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, pages 6-9. Then read the workbook text below and consider these questions.

The three critical questions are *What is our Purpose? What is our Role?* and *Do we want to become Professionals?* It is the authors' belief that we need to be experts in social development, facilitators of social skills.

Imagine yourself ten years from now. You have been asked to be the special guest at the local high school graduation. One of the graduates, formerly in your child care, is making a speech that names you as the most influential person in their life.

1. What would you want them to say about you personally?

2. What would they say about **how** you influenced them?

3. Why would you want them to say these particuar things? Why is that important to you?

4. Are child care workers babysitters? If not, how are we not like babysitters?

5. What are the drawbacks of being seen as a school after school?

6. Some programs extol how much fun they are. What are the drawbacks of programming ourselves this way?

7. What are the advantages to see our purpose as facilitators of social skills?

8. What are the drawbacks to see our purpose as facilitators of social skills?

Professionalism has a variety of meanings, signifying different things to different people. Some see professionalism as simply being good at their job, as in "I'm a professional, don't try this at home." Some see professionalism as those who get paid for their jobs. And some see professionalism as the use of cold, sterile techniques that help maintain a distance between the professional and the client.

We are using professionalism in the following way: a professional is a person with a deep knowledge of the subject area. A professional is familiar with the theories behind what they are doing.

In child care, a professional is one with the knowledge to know why a child is misbehaving, to know why children have a hard time with this activity, to know why children will enjoy this activity. When confronted with a new situation, the professional can go into their base of knowledge and figure out what **should** work, and then try it. If it does not go as expected, the professional whould be able to evaluate the situation and figure out why it didn't work, and what should work next time.

This definition of professionalism is very close to being a function of continuing education. If we are prepared beforehand, and continue to study once we are in the field, then the tendency for professionalism is high (and the tendency for burnout is low).

9. How has the text changed your view of professionalism?

10. Do you think most child care providers want to become professionals? Why or why not?

11. In an ideal setting, what kind of training would we want staff to have before working in child care?

12. What kind of training would we need if our child care took on the purpose of faciliating social skills?

13. If you were to design a college program for child care, what might it emphasize?

14. What area of learning do you need to explore? What do you need to know more about?

15. What will you do to learn this?

16. One of the issues that child care workers need to know about is the at-risk behaviors of children and youth, as well as the behavioral assets. This will be discussed in the upcoming pages. Write down the at-risk behaviors that you are familiar with.

Empowerment vs. Herding

Please read "Empowerment vs. Herding" in *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, pages 10-12. Then read the workbook text below and answer the questions. Dialog with each other as you work through the questions.

Empowering simply means "giving authority or power to." But what are we giving children the autority or power to do?

First, we are giving children the *permission to be children*. During SACC time, we don't need them to be little adults. We don't need them to be mindless automatons. We don't need them to be passive sponges for information. We need and want them to be children, with all the spontenaity, love, and play that is a part of childhood.

Secondly, we are empowering them to be capable—and more importantly, *to see themselves as capable*. In leadership positions, in making good choices, in earning and re-earning trust, we see them as capable people, who in turn, will see themselves as capable.

Fifty-three thousand children and youth died last year from lack of social skills, poor social networks, and bad choices. They die in drinking and driving accidents, drug overdose, suicide, homicide, complications of pregnancy, etc. The number of children and youth who die increases every year.

In SACC, we need to do more than keep them busy with activities. We need to teach them the social skills they need to live in society. That is the third way we empower children *to give them the skills they need* to live healthy, loving, productive lives as youth and adults.

Empowering is to be about the process of giving children freedom—but first to give them the skills to handle the freedom. When adults give the skills, the freedom, and a loving environment, children cannot help but grow.

1. What images come to mind when you hear the term *herding*? What are the characteristics of a SACC provider that herds?

2. How is herding different than empowering?

3. Respond to the idea that in SACC we ought to empower children to be children.

4. Respond to the idea that in SACC we ought to empower children to see themselves as capable.

5. Respond to the idea that in SACC we ought to empower children by giving them skills they need to live in society.

6. Children tend to rebel and misbehave when they are too controlled and oversupervised. Are there any signs of that in your SAC setting?

7. Children tend to be manipulative and abusive when they are given freedom but do not have the skills to live with that freedom. Are there any signs of that in your SAC setting?

8. What might be some dangers or risks in empowering children?

9. What attitudes are necessary among the staff to empower children?

Child leadership is one of the best ways to empower children. Children who meet in a committee and truly have the decision-making power over a clearly specified arena is a great step in the empowerment of children. Such a council may have to start small, and it may have growing pains, but a solid group of children with a skilled adult will work wonders.

The primary key to this concept working is that the children must truly have the authority. Adults should not take decisions away from them or rescue them when they fail.

10. Is there a place for such a council at your site?

11. What would their responsibilities be? What areas would they have authority over?

12. Which of the adults at your site might be a good "advisor" to this council?

13. What skills would the children need to learn as they proceed?

On the next page is a chart. Your staff could sit down with this chart and brainstorm the possibilities for empowering children.

The first column is *what are we doing now?* and it refers to the practices at the site now. The practice—it may be small and insignificant—will be something that holds children back, things that adults do that the children would benefit from doing. Write that down.

In the second column, write how you might change that practice to give children more autonomy, more responsibility, more of a chance for a place to belong.

In the third column, write what skills the children will need to be taught in order for the new practice to succeed.

An example has been done for you.

	What are we doing now?	What could we do differently?	What skills will the children need?
1	Adults are line leaders	Allow older children to become line leaders	How to lead; what to do if...; trust; patience;
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

Play vs. Busyness

Please read "Play vs. Busyness" in *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, pages 13-15. Then read the workbook text below and answer the questions.

Studies estimate that 70% of the trips to the doctor's office are made for stress-related purposes. It is not surprising that *Tagamet*, an anti-ulcer medication, *Valium*, a sedative, and *Prozac*, an anti-depressent are the top drugs prescribed today.

We don't know how to relax. Even our relaxations are doing something. You may know people who go on vacations and come back more tired than they left.

And people who do not know how to relax will never be able to teach their children how to relax.

When we do play games, they are usually competitive games, often with one winner and thirty losers. Competitive games do not enhance self-esteem. It does no good for the losers, and if the winners base their self-esteem on the fact they won, it will be a fragile esteem indeed.

We should not play games for the sake of playing games. We should diagnose the children's needs and play a game because it meets their needs.

Judy Mazza, a play consultant from Temple University uses the example of the game *musical chairs*. What does that game teach? It teaches to push, shove, and wrestle to get what you want. It is a huge contradiction to teach children about cooperation, sharing, and kindness, and then play *musical chairs*.

Games always teach. We need to look at the games we play, and use activities that are coordinated with whatever we are trying to do or teach that day.

1. What games do you regularly play at your child care site?

2. What messages do children get from those games? What do those games teach?

3. What messages do you want children to receive this week at your site?

4. Pick a game that teaches something innapropriate. How can you change the rules of that game to teach the healthy messages you picked in #3?

Play is not just about playing games. Play is the essence of self-esteem. Play is about an attitude. It is a way of being that is wide-eyed, kind, and laughing. Child care is serious business. It does not have to be a somber business. Playfulness allows children to be free to be themselves. Play is considering issues from their point of view. It is to put ourself in their shoes, to hear with their ears and see with their eyes if we really want to understand.

5. Pick several daily activities. How can they be more playful

6. What opportunities (outside of the gym time) do children have to be playful?

7. What opportunities do the adults have to be playful?

8. Rest is more than forced quiet time, and it is as important as playing active games. Are children taught how to rest and de-stress at your site? How, or if not, how might you go about that?

9. How can you provide children with opportunities to rest, relax, and de-busy themselves?

10. What opportunities do the adults have to model a destressed, playful life?

11. At your child care site is there an opportunity for children to explore various hobbies? If not, how might you provide those hobbies?

12. Are there opportunities to lead projects and activities that help children discover new ideas and new ways to communicate?

13. Are there enough projects that are open-ended—where children can fully express themselves and their ideas?

Community-building vs. Activity-led

Please read "Community-building vs. Activity-led" in *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, pages 16-17. Then read the workbook text below and answer the questions.

Community-building is any kind of activity that generates a sense of belonging among the children.

Community-building is best when it is done intentionally, for a purpose, with a specific end in mind. Rather than just conducting random activities, to take up time and keep kids busy, we can use the activities to cultivate a specific environment.

Community-building is where we discuss issues important to the whole tribe. It is not trivial issues like deciding as a group what activity to do next. Community-building is about significant relational issues, like discussing friendship, doing conflict resolution, or talking about multiculturalism.

Community-building is teaching the social skills—skills we need to live in society. These are not easily taught in isolation. It is better if social skills can be taught throughout the day, in all parts of the schedule. The skills they learn in child care will be the skills they use in adolescence. What they use in adolescence is what they will use as an adult.

Community-building is service learning, reaching out and doing things for other people. But it would be innapropriate to go out and do kind things for others without ever working on the skills needed for living together in the child care setting.

Community-building is intergenerational. Most of the time children are segregated by their age. What is the benefit to have children be in a group with other children whose sole commonality is being born at the same place at the same time?

We all need to belong, to have a place, a role. Community-building generates that kind of attitude.

1. What are the opportunities children have for significant (not in passing) intergenerational contact?

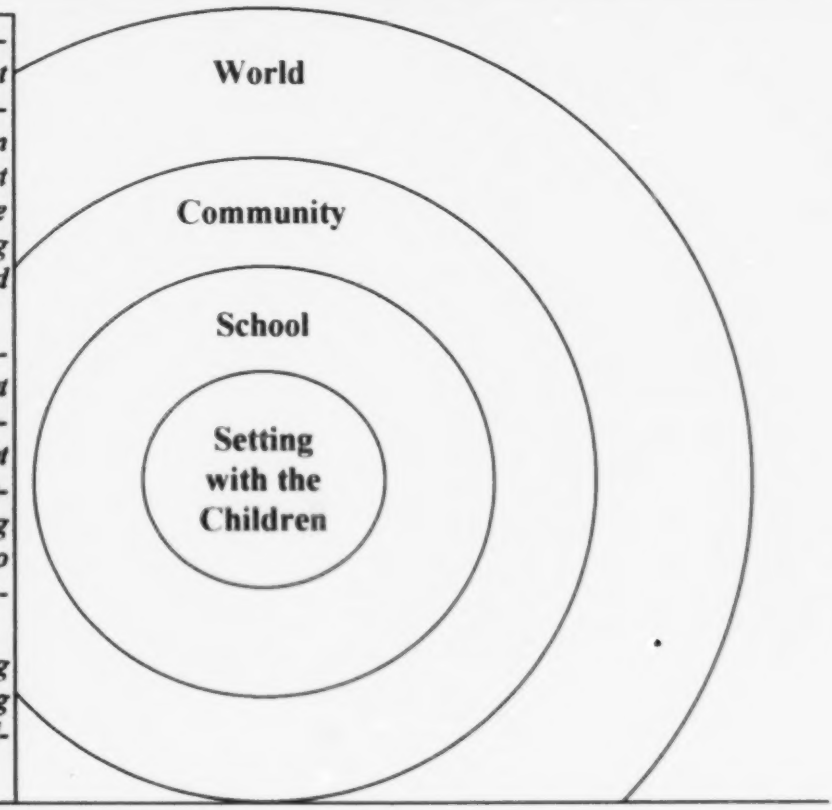
2. Which social skills do you teach? In what ways do you teach them?

3. How will you know if your kids are growing in their social skills and their ability to live together?

The concentric circles to the left represent the degrees of community-building, and perhaps, an order of priority. The first and most important place that community-building takes place is in the child care setting itself.

Next, a sense of belonging needs to happen at the school at which they belong. Then it is important they feel a part of the community—the surrounding town. Finally, we want to give them a sense of belonging in the world.

In a child care setting where community-building occurrs, the circles will always be getting smaller.



4. What life skills are you *not* teaching, but would like to teach?

5. How will you know that you are helping each child to grow? Is that possible?

6. How will you help the children feel a sense of belonging in their school?

7. How will you help the children feel a sense of belonging in the larger community? In the world?

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Maturity vs. Sophistication

Please read "Maturity vs. Sophistication" in *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, pages 18-19. Then read the workbook text below and answer the questions.

Maturity is to be in the process of discovering who you are within the context of the community of people around you. Maturity is making wise choices, it is living responsibly.

Relationships are the key to maturity. Maturity happens when we have relationships with people who are wiser than we are. Superficial relationships won't do it—children today have enough of those already.

In the 1940s, the average child spent three-and-a-half hours every day with some significant adult, usually a grandparent. Today, the average time children spend in significant adult contact is only a few minutes.

In-depth relationships are made more difficult by the lack of good role models. Television is filled with role models who have superficial and manipulative relationships. In our society we're better at talking to children than talking with them, better at directing them than listening to them. Reversing that trend will give us a generation of children who are mature, responsible, and self-esteemed.

1. In your own words, what is your understanding of the difference between maturity and sophistication?

2. What are the dangers inherent in children who are sophisticated without being mature?

3. What are some of the intentional activities that help children mature?

4. What are some of the activities that cause sophistication?

5. What are the components of a child care that is psychologically safe?

6. How can we establish child care settings with enough pyschological safety so that children will have the freedom to discover who they are?

7. What knowledge will staff need in order to facilitate maturity?

8. What skills and attitudes do staff need in order to facilitate maturity?

9. What are the skills and attitudes children need to grow in maturity?

10. Self-discovery is one of the ways children mature. How can we aid children on the road to self-discovery?

11. One of the ways children mature is through significant, long-term relationships with adults. Yet most child care settings change adults with each grade level. Why do you think this has become the norm?

12. Would it work, at your setting, to have children in a group with the same adult year after year?

13. How does the discussion of role and purpose affect your thinking of maturity?

14. Make a plan for helping the children—at your child care—to grow in maturity without growing in sophistication.

Self-Disciplined vs. Teacher-Punished

Please read "Self-Disciplined vs. Teacher-Punished" in *Giving Children Their Childhood Back*, pages 20-21. Then read the workbook text below and answer the questions.

Jane Nelsen, building off the work of Rudolph Dreikurs, suggests that all behavior is designed to find a sense of belonging and significance. Inapropriate behavior is a way for children to try to achieve those two goals.

Nelsen, in her book *Positive Discipline* lists four specific goals of misbehavior. 1) *to get attention*, as if the child believes "I only belong when I have your attention." 2) *to get power*, as if the child believes "I only belong when I'm winning" or "I only belong when you don't win." 3) *to get revenge*, as if the child is saying, "it hurts to not belong, but at least I can hurt you back." 4) *when they feel inadequate*, as if they say "I give up, it's impossible to belong."

Social scientists have known for decades that punishment doesn't work. While it may stop the initial behavior, it teaches the child to do the behavior without getting caught. Secondly, it teaches children that might makes right. Studies reveal that children from punitive families (families where punishment is the way to deal with inapropriate behavior) grow up with more drug abuse, mental health problems, depression, and alcoholism. Controlling, directive people tend to be punitive in their approach, and they should not be around children.

Self-discipline is getting the belonging and significance needs met without misbehaving. Self-discipline is making wise choices because they have been taught how to think and how to make decisions. Punishment does not teach children thinking skills or decision-making skills.

Self-discipline is good judgement and good problem-solving skills. Self-disciplined children are able to supervise themselves, not out of a fear of punishment, but because they *have been taught* how to make good choices.

1. What are some examples from your SAC setting of children who misbehave in order to get attention?

2. What are some examples from your SAC setting of children who misbehave in order to get power?

3. What are some examples from your SAC setting of children who misbehave in order to get revenge?

4. What are some examples from your SAC setting of children who misbehave because they feel inadequate?

5. What are the barriers to children learning self-discipline skills?

6. What are the advantages of children being self-disciplined?

7. What are the risks of children learning self-discipline skills?

8. How do the issues of oversupervision and undersupervision affect children learning self-discipline skills?

9. What are the skills and attitudes that adults must have to teach children self-discipline?

10. Many children have been "trained" to hassle adults until they get what they want. How does this issue fit into the discussion of self-discipline?

11. How will children learn the skills of problem-solving? What should that learning setting be?

12. How will children learn the skills of good judgement? What should that learning setting be?

13. In what ways, in your child care setting, can you teach the skills of self-discipline?

Summary

School-Age Child Care: The Next Generation

In any profession, there seems to be three generations that the field moves through before the field is respected, adequately compensated, and reaching its full effectiveness. School age care is moving through these three generations in a textbook fashion.

The first generation are the entrepreneurs, the ones who just start doing it. There are few rewards and the road before them has not been traveled. These pioneers blaze the trail for the rest of us. In this first generation there are no college courses available, and the workers in the field are lucky if they can find a workshop to help them do what they do. In this first generation, few, if any children say "I want to do that when I grow up."

The second generation is marked by several things. Some people in the field declare that this will be their life-long career. Associations begin to develop, and field people begin to express their need for further training. They start to pressure colleges into starting preparatory programs and continuing education experiences. A few field workers pioneer the higher education system, and work to get master's degrees in the particular discipline, even if it means inventing the program as it goes. Resources become more common, not only books of techniques, but also texts that outline the theory that undergirds the profession. A large percentage of the field people begin to dialog about role and purpose.

The second generation is a transitional period, marked by exciting developments and frustrating dead ends. Leaders with vision, and field people with dedication are the motors that push the second generation into the third generation.

The third generation is marked by colleges across the country who have BA programs in the discipline. These BA programs are standardized across the colleges, so that everyone receives the same training. The college programs are taught by people with advanced degrees who have been in the field. People enter the field intending it to be a life career, and children grow up who want to join that field. There is a certification process, so that standards of quality can be maintained--and when an individual does not meet the standards of quality set up by the field, then that individual loses their certification and can no longer work within that field.

In school-age care, we are in that second generation. Associations are developing, resources are being published. Over 150 colleges across the country are no providing some kind of school-age care classes. We have leaders with vision who are doing remarkable things in the field. And over 80% of us see ourselves as staying in the field for the foreseeable future.

If the field of school-age care is to push itself to the third generation, several things must happen. We must continue to network and support the associations. We must continue to pressure our colleges to begin intensive work in child care preparation and continuing education. We must continue to dialog about role and purpose. We must find solutions to the problems of high turnover, of low pay, and of the myth that says "anyone can do child care."

Furthermore, the authors believe we need to become experts in teaching social skills to children. We can do a profound service to our children and our society by teaching the skills that are no longer taught. Children need to know the skills of self-esteem, responsibility, non-violent conflict resolution, empathy, service, and self-discipline. There is no better place to teach these skills than in the peer group, and there is no more appropriate place to teach the group than at our sites.

Above all, we hope this discussion guide has helped provide for shared dialog. We need to learn from the wisdom and experiences of each other, and we hope that this workbook has been a tool for that process. ●

For Further Reading

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Comment Form

____Yes, I want to participate in the dialog in child care. Below are my comments in reaction to this workbook (use other sheets if necessary).

____Please let me know when more materials and staff development modules are available. My address, phone, and fax are below.

Comments:

Please return this comment form to:

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